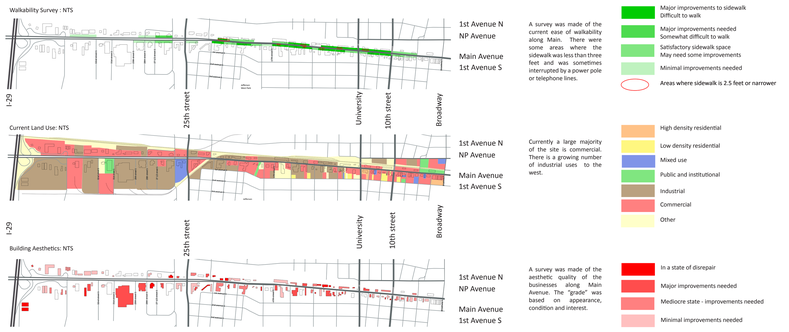
Community Resilience: Investing in Walkability

How can the increase in walkability contribute to the socio-economic resilience of a community?

"First fix the streets, then the people and businesses will follow"
- Dan Burden, Walkable Communities, INC.



A survey was made of the current ease of walkability along Main. There were some areas where the sidewalk was less than three feet and was sometimes interrupted by a power pole or telephone lines.

- Major improvements to sidewalk Difficult to walk
- Major improvements needed Somewhat difficult to walk
- Satisfactory sidewalk space May need some improvements
- Minimal improvements needed
- Areas where sidewalk is 2.5 feet or narrower

Currently a large majority of the site is commercial. There is a growing number of industrial uses to the west.

- High density residential
- Low density residential
- Mixed use
- Public and institutional
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Other

A survey was made of the aesthetic quality of the businesses along Main Avenue. The "grade" was based on appearance, condition and interest.

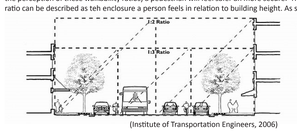
- In a state of disrepair
- Major improvements needed
- Mediocre state - Improvements needed
- Minimal improvements needed
- High aesthetic value, no improvements needed

Benefits of Walkability in a neighborhood and it's surroundings

- An increase in walkability is connected to an increase in community and civic interaction
- Increases the perception of safety
- Increases in sales per square foot in surrounding businesses
- Increases the property values of surroundings houses (Houses with above - average levels of walkability typically increase the value of a house between 4,000 and 34,000 dollars
- Provides a safe and affordable travel for those with or without cars
- Improves accessibility for other adults and persons with disabilities.

Walkability Interventions

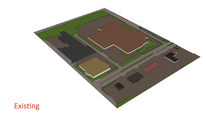
Currently there are a very limited amount of pedestrians walking on Main Avenue even though it is connected to Broadway which is a popular pedestrian thoroughfare. Establishing walkability ratios (or the perception of these walkability ratios) a pedestrian will feel safer an more secure. The walkability ratio can be described as teh enclosure a person feels in relation to building height. As shown below.



(Institute of Transportation Engineers, 2006)

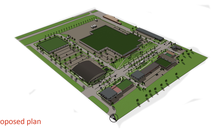
Master Plan

Gateway District



Existing

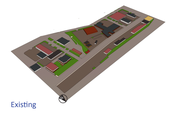
Currently the Gateway District is lacking the "hometown" feeling Fargo prides itself in. The main entryway into the city has become heavily focused on the automobile and has left little planning for pedestrians or cyclists. This district has the highest rate of foreclosure in Fargo, ND and currently has eight vacant buildings. A majority of the buildings in this area ranked very low in aesthetics and have very few windows looking towards the street. The sidewalk in this area is very easy to navigate however, the buildings are too far set back for any sense of security and the sidewalk is right next against the 40 mile and hour traffic of Main Avenue.



Proposed plan

In history, Main Avenue was the most prized street in Fargo, ND because it was the gateway to the city. Since a majority of the warehouses in this district have been located on Main Avenue for an extended period of time, displacing them would create the same aesthetic problems elsewhere. So for this portion of the site, focus will be given to creating a better entry and pedestrian and bicyclist circulation.

Madison District



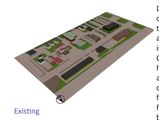
Existing

The Madison District is located in the Madison - Unicorn Park neighborhood. This portion of the site has a large concentration of minorities and low income housing. It currently has the highest amount of vacant buildings and low aesthetic buildings. Just south of this district is the Jefferson Elementary School and a vast amount of apartments to the south. This district has the connection to Jefferson West Park, however currently the connection is often overlooked as it is easy to miss.

Proposed Plan

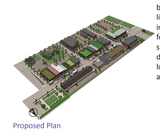
This district is ideal for urban infill. This district has a lot of current businesses however lacks basic amenities like grocery stores and restaurants. By creating a strong connection between the southern apartments, Jefferson West Park and Main Avenue, there can be a strong link between the amenities provided and the people who will use them. This will help keep revenue that would normally leave the site on Main Avenue.

Downtown West



Existing

Downtown West District currently has more commercial and mixed use building than the other two districts. This district between Broadway and 10th Street is part of the downtown zone and is the most walkable portion of the entire site. Overall this area has very high aesthetics and has some buildings that are architecturally a destination. To the west of 10th Street the district begins to deviate from the downtown feel. The parking lots are once again in the front of buildings which can create a disconnect between the store front and the road and more conflicts for pedestrians and automobiles.



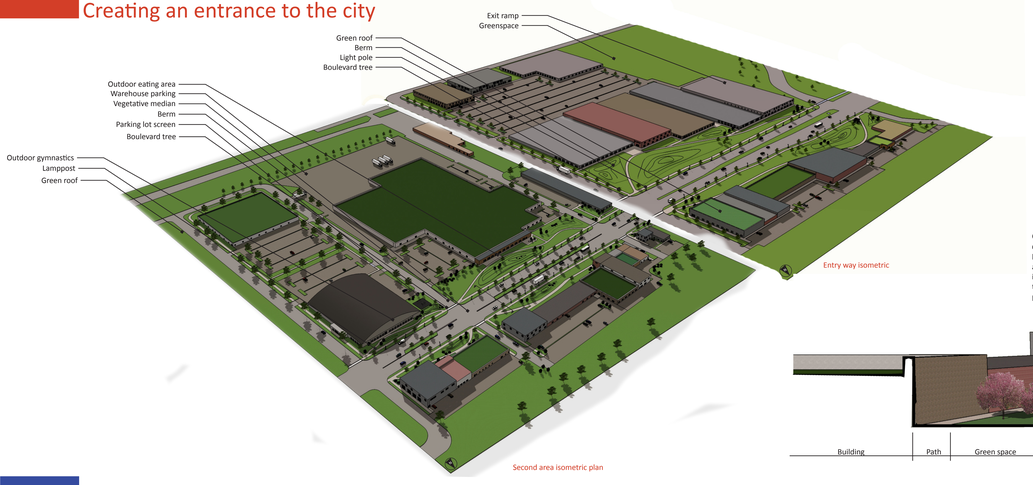
Proposed Plan

The proposed plan moves all parking to the back to create a space for pedestrians. By limiting the amount of turning for parking to the intersections of road, there are less impact points for pedestrians. The proposed plan also creates spaces that can serve as greenspaces and walkable destinations for people. The greenspaces are located on a parking lot that is hardly used and a small near University that is currently unused.

Ashley Mellgren
LA 572 Design Thesis
Thesis Advisor: Jason Kost
Software Used: AutoCAD 2011
Google Sketchup
Adobe Photoshop
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe Indesign

Gateway District:

Creating an entrance to the city



Entry way isometric

Second area isometric plan

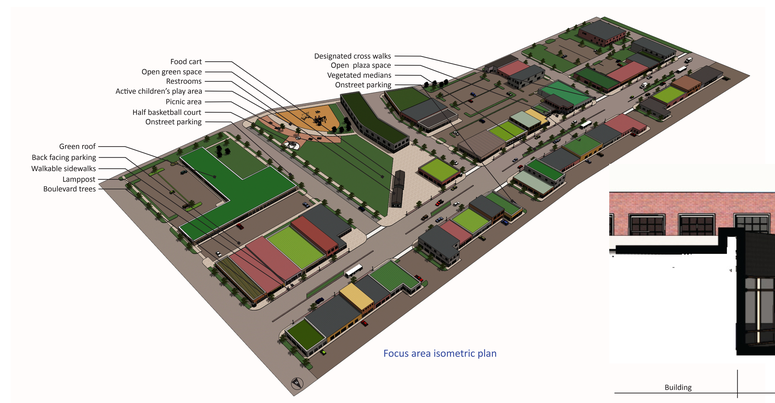
Gateway District

Currently Main Avenue lacks Fargo's hometown character. Since most of the buildings have been here for many years, and by pushing them elsewhere the problem is pushed along with it. Here in this district it is embraced however options are explored to enhance it's cohesiveness to the other parts of the project. There is a small amount of infill on the northern part of the focus area. This is to close the open gaps. The naturalistic paths are to bring people safely from the intersection to the store and business fronts.

Section perspective

Madison District:

Connecting to Jefferson West Park and southern residential

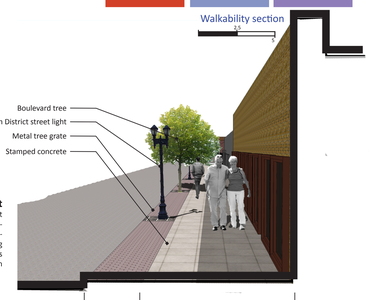


Focus area isometric plan

Section perspective

Perspective

Walkability section



Madison District

The main focus in this part was the connection to Jefferson West Park and residences to the south. This space has a lot of opportunities for amenities and commercial businesses while still being within walking distance of Fargo's downtown. The parking has moved completely to the back to allow for less impact areas between cars and pedestrians. It serves as a transition between the downtown atmosphere and the Gateway District.

Downtown West District:

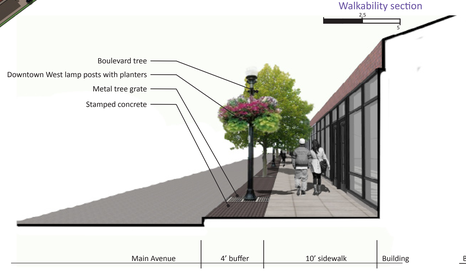
Connecting to Fargo's downtown

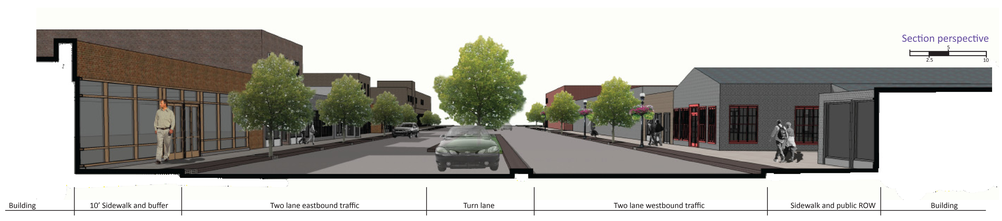
Downtown West

Downtown West is an extension of Fargo's downtown. This gives the opportunity for small boutiques, bars and restaurants to expand and continue onto Main Avenue. The parking is in the back since this will be the most frequented part of the site. It features two destination greenspaces that can serve as walkable destinations.

Focus area isometric plan

Walkability section





Section perspective

Perspective of green space near University